1791

Question Taken, December 1, 1978

Guyana, Jonestown

Q. What kind of cash crops were produced by the Peoples Temple?

A. The Peoples Temple grew cassava, plantains, bananas, pineapple, eddoes, okra, bora beans, legumes and some other tropical fruits and vegetables. They also raised pigs and chickens. Some output was sold, but we do not believe the community was self-sufficient in food.

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Question Taken, December 1, 1978

Guyana, Jonestown

Q. In last Tuesday's briefing Mr. Bushnell indicated that a person defecting from the People's Temple was interviewed aboard a plane and provided no corroborative evidence. Your statement today indicates the contrary. Who was right?

A. Tuesday, November 21, Mr. Bushnell indicated that even in two cases where people were leaving Guyana, "we did not get any confirmation of the sort of allegation that we were getting in the mail." Although it is obvious that a person leaving Guyana was not in fact being held against his or her will, it is a fact that one of the two persons referred to by Mr. Bushnell did allege to a consular officer that other persons were being held against their will and that at least one specific person had been beaten more than once. The consular officer noted this information to be followed up at the next visit to Jonestown. The allegations were discussed with Guyanese police officials upon McCoy's return to Guyana; they later informed him that their officers who had visited the community could not confirm her statements. Mr. Bushnell was simply not fully informed at the time of that November 21 briefing.

Question Taken, December 1, 1978

Guyana, Jonestown

Q. According to Ryan's aides, the Guyana judge who was trying the child custody case said that he dropped the case because he received death threats from the Jonestown community. Can you find out if the State Department was aware of that at the time?

A. On August 16, 1978 the Embassy in Georgetown reported that a high court judge had disassociated himself from a case involving a non-Guyanese child because of "pressure tactics mounted upon the government and the court." The Embassy provided the full statement of the judge as printed in a local newspaper; the relevant portions follow.

"In this matter which concerns a non-Guyanese child and parties, there have been persistent efforts of an extra-legal or approbious nature, in the form of letters and other documents, as well as telephone calls, intended to influence the outcome of the preceedings, in favour of one side or the other.

"I consider those acts mean and despicable and feel obliged to decline adjudicating in the cause.

"I should say that earlier on I had summoned the lawyers for both parties to my chambers, to inform them of the several attempts aimed at perverting the course of justice.

"I was satisfied then, and now, that they were not implicated in any way whatsoever in those attempts. They at all times discharged their professional obligations with commendable integrity and erudition."

Question Taken, December 1, 1978

Guyana, Jonestown

Q. Do you know if the letter that Congressman Ryan wrote to Secretary Vance on December 8, 1977 requesting that Jones' passport be lifted and that he be returned to the United States was ever turned over to the Department of Justice or to the FBI to see if there were grounds for extradition?

A. The Department replied to Congressman Ryan on December 23, 1977. The key paragraphs of the reply follow:

While we in the Department sympathize very much with Mrs. Stoen in her efforts to regain custody of her son, regrettably there is little we can do to be of assistance to her. We note that Mrs. Stoen previously signed over custody of her son to the religious group. The Department has met personally with the two California attorneys engaged by Mrs. Stoen to assist her in this case. They have been given advice concerning the handling of a child custody case in a foreign country. They have also been advised that the American Embassy in Guyana is prepared to offer all possible assistance to them and to Mrs. Stoen's Guyanese attorney if such assistance is required during the hearings scheduled in Guyana this month.

As you are undoubtedly aware, neither the Department of State nor the Superior Court, State of California has the authority to enforce the order of November 18, regarding the custody of John Victor Stoen in Guyana. Under many

foreign laws there are provisions for proving foreign judgments, although, unfortunately custody orders are usually excluded from this procedure. Child custody orders issued in the United States are normally not accepted for enforcement in another country on the basis of comity. The question of John Victor Stoen's custody will almost certainly be decided by the Guyanese court, after hearing all relevant evidence, on the basis of Guyanese law. The California court order undoubtedly will be given evidentiary weight in the custody hearing, but by no means will it be binding on that court.

Question Taken, December 1, 1978

Guyana, Jonestown

Q. Have you found out yet what has happened to the $500,000 and the note to the Soviet Embassy that was allegedly sent?

A. The money is in the custody of the Government of Guyana.

We have no official information on the reported note.

Question Taken, December 1, 1978

Guyana, Jonestown

Q. How many times did Mr. McCoy speak with Rev. Jones?

A. Four times in person. Never on the phone.

Question Taken, December 1, 1978

Guyana, Jonestown

Q. Beyond the personal sworn statement can you give us any more information as to why the Department is satisfied that a department official was not involved in a compromising sexual situation?

A. The Department does not reveal its investigative procedures. The Department is fully satisfied that the charge made is false. Nevertheless, additional investigative actions to further confirm this finding are underway.

Question Taken, December 1, 1978

Guyana, Jonestown

Q. Are lie detector tests now being applied to FSO's or anyone now working in this building when a person's word is involved?

A. No.

Question Taken, December 1, 1978

Guyana, Jonestown

Q. Do you have the dates of Mr. McCoy's two conversations with Mrs. Blakey?

A. The first conversation took place aboard an airplane between Georgetown and New York on May 13, 1978. The second was a telephone conversation between Mrs. Blakey and Mr. McCoy who was in Washington during the work week of May 15-19.

Question Taken, December 1, 1978

Guyana, Jonestown

Q. Did Mr. McCoy warn Jones of when he intended to visit Jonestown and of those persons he intended to visit?

A. Mr. McCoy made arrangements for visits to Jonestown through the Peoples Temple Georgetown Office, usually several days in advance. He provided a list of names of some of the people with whom he wished to talk; part of this list consisted of people he was seeing on routine consular matters, some were persons on whom we had received allegations of mistreatment in the mail. However, on no occasion did he provide the Peoples Temple with a full list of names. At each visit he asked to see additional persons about whom specific allegations of mistreatment had been made.